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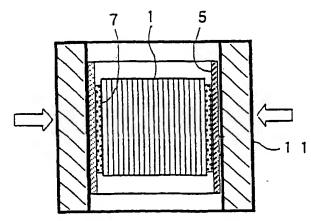
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(54) Title: ASSEMBLY METHOD UTILIZING DISPLAY INFORMATION, AND ASSEMBLY FABRICATED BY THE ASSEMBLY METHOD

(54) 発明の名称: 表示情報を利用した組み立て方法及び当該組み立て方法により組み立てられたアッセンブリ



(57) Abstract: A method of fabricating an assembly having a cell structural body (1) stored and held in a metal container (5) through a compressive material (7) by disposing the compressive material (7) having a cushioning capability in compressed state between the outer peripheral part of the cell structural body (1) and the tubular metal container (5) and adding a compressive surface pressure to the cell structural body (1) through the compressive material (7) so as to hold the cell structural body (1) in the metal container (5), comprising the steps of displaying the information on the outside diameter dimensions of the cell structural body (1) and/or the inside diameter dimensions of the metal container (5) on the surface thereof before proceeding to the assembly process and, in the assembly process, reading the information and, based on the information, selecting the cell structural body (1) and the metal container (5) for proper holding requirements, whereby the proper state of the cell structural body without causing any damage can be easily provided by suppress-

ing, if any, the effect of a variation in the outside dimensions of the members of the cell structural body forming the assembly.

(57) 要約:

セル構造体(1)の外周部と筒状の金属容器(5)との間にクッション性を有する圧縮性材料(7)を圧縮状態で配し、前記セル構造体(1)へ前記圧縮性材料(7)を介して圧縮面圧を付与することで、前記セル構造体(1)を前記金属容器(5)内に把持することにより、セル構造体(1)を圧縮性材料(7)を介して金属容器(5)内に収納把持したアッセンブリを組み立てる方法である。組み立て工程に入る前に予め前記セル構造体(1)の外径寸法及び/又は前記金属容器(5)の内径寸法に関する情報をその部材表面上に表示しておき、組み立て工程において、前記情報を読み取り、その情報に基づいて、適切な把持条件となるセル構造体(1)と金属容器(5)とを選び出す。アッセンブリを構成するセル構造体等の部材の外形寸法などにバラツキがあっても、その影響を抑え、セル構造体の破損等の無い適切な把持状態が容易に得られる。

1

明 細 書

表示情報を利用した組み立て方法及び当該組み立て方法により組み立てられたアッセンブリ

技術分野

本発明は、セル構造体を圧縮性材料を介して金属容器内に収納把持したアッセンブリを組み立てる方法に関し、更に詳しくは前記アッセンブリを構成する部材の表面に固有情報を表示しておき、当該固有情報を利用して、適切な組み合わせ条件となる部材同士によるアッセンブリの組み立てを行う方法に関する。本発明は、内燃機関の排気ガス浄化用、脱臭用触媒担体又はフィルター、あるいは触媒作用を利用する化学反応機器、例えば燃料電池用改質器等に用いられる触媒用担体又はフィルターなどに適用することができる。

背景技術

内燃機関の排ガス浄化や触媒作用を利用する化学反応機器のために用いられる 触媒コンバータ、あるいはフィルター、熱交換器等の用途に使用されるアッセン ブリとして、セル構造体と筒状の金属容器(缶体)との間に、クッション性を有 する圧縮性材料を配し、セル構造体へ圧縮性材料を介して所定の圧縮面圧を付与 することにより、セル構造体を金属容器内に把持収納(キャニング)したものが 知られている。

例えば、このようなアッセンブリを自動車排ガス浄化用の触媒コンバータとして用いる場合には、セル構造体の一種であるセラミック製ハニカム状構造体に、 触媒成分として白金、パラジウム、ロジウム等の貴金属を分散担持したものを、 セラミックマット等を介して金属容器(缶体)内に収納把持して排気系に搭載する。

セル構造体は、前述のようにその外周面に圧縮面圧を付与されることにより金 属容器内に把持されるため高い強度を持つことが好ましいが、自動車排ガス浄化 用の触媒担体として用いられるハニカム状構造体などにおいては、浄化性能向上のためセル隔壁の薄壁化が進行しており、これに伴い強度レベルが低下しつつある。

セル構造体の強度は、「アイソスタティック破壊強度試験」で測定することができる。これは、ゴムの筒状容器にセル構造体を入れてアルミ製板で蓋をし、水中で等方加圧圧縮を行う試験で、コンバータの缶体にセル構造体が外周面把持される場合の圧縮負荷加重を模擬している。アイソスタティック強度は、担体が破壊した時の加圧圧力値で示され、社団法人自動車技術会発行の自動車規格JASO規格M505-87で規定されている。

一般的に、自動車排ガス浄化用コンバータの触媒担体として用いられるセラミック製のハニカム状構造体は、セル隔壁厚さが0.11mm以下でかつ開口率が85%を越えると、アイソスタティック強度を10kg/cm²以上に維持することが非常に困難となることが判ってきた。

キャニング設計時に設定した設計面圧よりも高い面圧が実際のキャニングで発生した場合に、セル構造体のアイソスタティック強度を越えるようであれば、その個所で構造体が破損してしまう危険がある。セル構造体のセル隔壁厚さが薄くなり、構造体強度レベルが低くなるに従い、設計面圧を下げることが必要であるが、実際のキャニング面圧の異常上昇を抑え、面圧の変動をできる限り小さくしてやることが必要になる。設計面圧と実際の面圧が等しければ狙い通りのキャニング設計が可能で理想的である。

更に、セル構造体の外形精度に起因して、セル構造体とそれを収容する金属容器との間のギャップが一定でないことが原因で、セル構造体の外周部に作用する 圧縮圧力が均一にならず、部分的に大きな把持面圧が作用することで、セル構造体を破損する可能性がある。

一方で、面圧を下げ過ぎると、実使用環境下で高温排ガス流れや振動を受けることにより、金属容器内にセル構造体を把持しておくことができなくなるため、必要最低面圧が存在する。セル構造体の隔壁厚さが薄くなるに従って、セル構造体のアイソスタティック強度レベルが低下するので、セル構造体を把持する圧縮

面圧も、セル構造体把持に必要な最低面圧を保持しながらできる限り低くする必要があり、圧縮面圧のレベルが低くなるに従って、面圧のバラツキも小さくする、即ちより均一な面圧分布にする必要がある。

セル構造体を金属容器内に適切な状態で収納把持するためには、セル構造体の 寸法形状のバラツキをできるだけ小さくすることが望ましい。しかしながら、前 記のような触媒担体として用いられるセラミック製のハニカム状構造体は、押し 出し成形後に、そのまま乾燥され、所定の長さに加工された後に、焼成された状態のままで金属容器内に収納されるので、ハニカム状構造体の外径寸法は、成形、乾燥、焼成の全ての工程における寸法変動や変形が加算された状態となり、金属加工部材などに較べて非常に大きな寸法形状のバラツキを有している。

一部では、大型サイズのハニカム状構造体において、焼成後にその外周を機械加工除去して後、セラミックセメントで外周を被覆することが行われているが、一般には焼成後にセラミック製ハニカム状構造体の外周を機械加工することなく実用に供する。そのため、セラミック製ハニカム状構造体の外径精度を如何に向上するかの検討がなされる一方で、金属容器内にセラミック製ハニカム状構造体を収納する場合において、ハニカム状構造体外径寸法のバラツキの影響を如何にして小さく抑えるかが課題となっている。

本発明は、上記した従来の問題に鑑みてなされたものであり、セル構造体を圧縮性材料を介して金属容器内に収納把持したアッセンブリを組み立てる際に、当該アッセンブリを構成するセル構造体等の部材の外形寸法などにバラツキがあっても、その影響を抑え、セル構造体の破損等の無い適切な把持状態が容易に得られるような組み立て方法を提供することを目的とする。

発明の開示

本発明によれば、セル構造体の外周部と筒状の金属容器との間にクッション性を有する圧縮性材料を圧縮状態で配し、前記セル構造体へ前記圧縮性材料を介して圧縮面圧を付与することで、前記セル構造体を前記金属容器内に把持することにより、セル構造体を圧縮性材料を介して金属容器内に収納把持したアッセンブ

リを組み立てる方法において、組み立て工程に入る前に予め前記セル構造体の外径寸法及び/又は前記金属容器の内径寸法に関する情報をその部材表面上に表示しておき、組み立て工程において、前記情報を読み取り、その情報に基づいて、適切な把持条件となるセル構造体と金属容器とを選び出すことを特徴とする組み立て方法(第1発明)、が提供される。

また、本発明によれば、セル構造体の外周部と筒状の金属容器との間にクッション性を有する圧縮性材料を圧縮状態で配し、前記セル構造体へ前記圧縮性材料を介して圧縮面圧を付与することで、前記セル構造体を前記金属容器内に把持することにより、セル構造体を圧縮性材料を介して金属容器内に収納把持したアッセンブリを組み立てる方法において、組み立て工程に入る前に予め前記セル構造体の外径寸法に関する情報をその部材表面上に表示しておき、組み立て工程において、前記情報を読み取り、その情報に基づいて、適切な把持条件となるように金属容器を製造して前記セル構造体と組み合わせることを特徴とする組み立て方法(第2発明)、が提供される。

更に、本発明によれば、前述のいずれかの組み立て方法により組み立てられた アッセンブリ(第3発明)、が提供される。

更に、本発明によれば、前述のいずれかの組み立て方法に用いられる前記情報 が表示されたセル構造体(第4発明)、が提供される。

図面の簡単な説明

図1 (a) (b) は、実施例において、セル構造体として用いたハニカム状構造体を示す説明図で、図1 (a) が平面図であり、図1 (b) が斜視図である。

図2は、レーザーマーカー装置によるバーコードのマーキング方法を示す説明 図である。

図3は、ハニカム状構造体の金属容器内への収納及び把持をクラムシェル方法を用いて行う場合を示す説明図である。

図4は、ハニカム状構造体の金属容器内への収納及び把持を押し込み方法を用いて行う場合を示す説明図である。

図5は、ハニカム状構造体の金属容器内への収納及び把持を巻き絞め方法を用いて行う場合を示す説明図である。

図6は、ハニカム状構造体の金属容器内への収納及び把持を縮管方法を用いて行う場合を示す説明図である。

図7は、ハニカム状構造体の金属容器内への収納及び把持を縮管方法を用いて 行う場合を示す説明図である。

図8は、ハニカム状構造体の金属容器内への収納及び把持を回転鍛造方法を用いて行う場合を示す説明図である。

発明を実施するための最良の形態

前述のように、触媒コンバータ等に使用される、セル構造体を圧縮性材料を介して金属容器内に収納把持したアッセンブリは、セル構造体の外周部と筒状の金属容器との間にクッション性を有する圧縮性材料を圧縮状態で配し、セル構造体へ圧縮性材料を介して圧縮面圧を付与することで、セル構造体を金属容器内に把持することにより組み立てられる。

第1発明は、このようなアッセンブリの組み立て方法において、組み立て工程 に入る前に予めセル構造体の外径寸法及び/又は金属容器の内径寸法に関する情 報をその部材表面上に表示しておき、組み立て工程において、前記情報を読み取 り、その情報に基づいて、適切な把持条件となるセル構造体と金属容器とを選び 出すことを特徴とする。

このように部材表面上に表示したセル構造体の外径寸法及び/又は金属容器の内径寸法に関する情報から、それぞれ適切な寸法の組み合わせとなるセル構造体と金属容器とを選び出すことにより、金属容器に収納把持されたセル構造体には適切な範囲で面圧が付与される。

第2発明は、同様のアッセンブリの組み立て方法において、組み立て工程に入る前に予め前記セル構造体の外径寸法に関する情報をその部材表面上に表示して おき、組み立て工程において、前記情報を読み取り、その情報に基づいて、適切 な把持条件となるように金属容器を製造して前記セル構造体と組み合わせること を特徴とする。

このように部材表面上に表示した個々のセル構造体の固有外径寸法に関する情報から、その外形寸法に応じた適切な内径寸法を有する金属容器を作製して、両者を組み合わせることにより、金属容器に収納把持されたセル構造体には適切な範囲で面圧が付与される。

第1及び第2発明において、情報の表示形式には文字やバーコードを用いることができる。情報は、2種類の表示形式を用いて表示してもよく、例えば文字とバーコードとの両方の表示形式を併用することも可能である。また、情報は、インク塗布、レーザー、サンドブラスト、化学的な腐食作用、スタンプによる押印(スタンピング)等により表示することができる。情報をラベルに印刷して、そのラベルを部材表面上に貼付するようにしてもよい。インクにより情報を表する場合は、インクジェット方法又は熱転写方法を用いることが好ましい。

これら情報の表示方法についても、2種類の方法を併用することができ、例えばインクジェット方法又は熱転写方法とスタンピングとの両方の表示方法を併用することも可能である。また、インクにより情報を表示する場合は、必要に応じて2種類のインク、例えば耐熱性インクと耐熱性のないインクとを併用するようにしてもよい。

なお、本発明により組み立てるアッセンブリが、触媒コンバータのようにセル 構造体に触媒成分を担持するものである場合には、情報を表示した後、その表示 された情報の上に、ラッカー、パラフィン、ビニール等の樹脂やシリカゾルのよ うな透明な撥水性液を塗布することが好ましい。

担体となるセル構造体は、触媒成分担持後、触媒成分の種類や濃度によって、 茶褐色から黒色まで主に褐色系統の様々な色に着色される。また、担体に触媒成分を固定するために、400~800℃程度で熱処理して焼き付けが行われるので、インクにより情報を表示する場合は、耐熱性インクが用いられる。また、触媒成分は一般に水溶液にして担体に担持するため、担体(セル構造体)にはある程度の吸水性があることが望ましく、通常は気孔率が20~40%程度の材料からなるものが用いられる。 このような条件において、表示された情報の上に前記のような撥水性液を塗布することなく、触媒成分を含む水溶液をセル構造体の貫通孔内に流し込む触媒付けを行うと、当該水溶液は毛細管現象により連通した気孔を通じてセル構造体の外周壁まで浸み出し、外周面の情報が表示された部分をも着色する。耐熱性インクは、その種類が限られ、鮮やかな色のものはなく、熱処理後に触媒成分と同じような褐色系統の色になるものが多いため、情報が表示された部分まで着色されてしまうと、情報が読みとりにくくなる。特に、一様に着色せず、まだら状に着色された場合には、画像解析のような鮮明さを要求される読みとり方法では、読みとりができなくなる現象が生じる。

これに対し、表示された情報の上に前記のような撥水性液を塗布しておくと、 撥水性液は表示部の表面及び材料の気孔中に入り込み、触媒付けしたときに毛細 管現象で外周壁まで浸み出してくる水溶液や外周壁表面に垂れてくる水溶液をは じいて、情報表示部分の着色を防ぎ、読みとり可能な状態を維持することができ る。

耐熱性インクの耐熱成分は顔料(鉱物粉末)で、インクジェットに適用する場合には、その顔料の粒度を小さくする必要があり、更に含有量もあまり多くできないため印影は薄くなるが、スタンピングの場合は、インクジェットに比べて顔料含有率を高くでき、捺印された印影は厚く濃くなるため、コントラストが確保され、その結果、触媒成分の浸透を阻止し、識字率を高めることができる。

しかし、スタンピングの場合は機械的に押印するため、インクジェットに比較して時間が掛かる欠点がある。したがって、速いラインのスピードでインクジェットで印刷し、別のラインでスタンプすると都合が良い場合もある。この場合、最終的に耐熱性が必要でもスタンピングのインクを耐熱性にしておけば、インクジェットのインクは必ずしも耐熱性は必要ない。

クッション性を有する圧縮性材料としては、金属製ワイヤメッシュ、セラミック繊維とバーミキュライトで構成される加熱膨張性マット、セラミック繊維を主成分としバーミキュライトを含まない非加熱膨張性マットからなる群より選ばれた1種の材料又は2種以上の複合材料が好ましい。

特に、セル構造体が薄壁構造である場合には、アルミナ、高アルミナ、ムライト、炭化珪素、窒化珪素、ジルコニア、チタニア等のセラミック繊維を主成分とし、バーミキュライトのような加熱性膨張材料を含まない非加熱膨張性マットを用いると、実用温度範囲内においてセル構造体外周部に作用する圧縮力が大きく変動せず、しかもセル構造体外周部全体に圧縮力が実質的に均一に作用するので好ましい。

金属容器内へのセル構造体の収納、及びセル構造体へ圧縮性材料を介して圧縮 面圧を付与する方法としては、クラムシェル方法、押し込み方法、巻き絞め方法 、縮管方法、及び回転鍛造方法のうちのいずれかの方法を用いることが好ましい

セル構造体としては、複数の隔壁により形成された複数のセル通路を有するハニカム状構造体であって、セル隔壁厚さが0.11mm以下、開口率が85%以上であるものが好ましい。更に、ハニカム状構造体としては構造体の周囲にその外径輪郭を形成する外壁を有し、その外壁厚さが少なくとも0.05mmであるものが好ましい。なお、本発明において用いるセル構造体としては、前記のようなハニカム状構造体のほか、フォーム状構造体であってもよい。

セル構造体は、コージェライト、アルミナ、ムライト、リチウム・アルミニウム・シリケート、チタン酸アルミニウム、チタニア、ジルコニア、窒化珪素、窒化アルミニウム及び炭化珪素からなる群より選ばれた1種のセラミック材料又は2種以上のセラミック材料の複合物からなることが好ましい。また、活性炭、シリカゲル及びゼオライトからなる群より選ばれた1種の吸着材料からなるものも好適に使用できる。

なお、押出し成形により作製されるハニカム状構造体のセル形状には、三角形、四角形、六角形、丸形などがあり、一般的には、四角形状の一つである正方形のセルを持つものが多く利用されているが、最近は六角形のセルを持つハニカム状構造体も利用が進んでいる。

触媒コンバータとして使用する場合には、セル構造体に触媒成分を担持する必要があり、通常は、セル構造体に触媒成分を担持した後に、そのセル構造体を金

属容器内に収納把持するが、セル構造体を金属容器内に収納把持した後に、その セル構造体に触媒成分を担持するようにしてもよい。

第3発明は、前記第1又は第2発明に係る方法により組み立てられたアッセンブリであり、前述のように、セル構造体が適切な圧縮面圧で金属容器内に把持されているので、自動車排ガス浄化用触媒コンバータなどの用途に好適に利用できる。また、第4発明は、前記第1又は第2発明に係る方法に用いられる前記情報が表示された組立前のセル構造体であり、予め前述のような種々の形式や手段で情報が表示されており、当該情報に基づいて第1又は第2発明の組立方法が実現される。

なお、アッセンブリは、複数のセル構造体を、セル通路方向に沿って1つの金属容器内にクッション性を有する圧縮性材料を介して直列に配列した構造となっていてもよい。また、1つのセル構造体を1つの金属容器内にクッション性を有する圧縮性材料を介して収納把持したアッセンブリを複数個、セル構造体のセル通路方向に沿って、1つの金属外筒内に直列に配列して用いてもよい。ただし、本発明においては、個々のハニカム状構造体の外径寸法に応じて、金属容器寸法を変えているので、これらの金属容器を複数個つなぐ場合には、できるだけサイズの近いもの同士を繋ぐことが望ましい。

(実施例) 以下、セル構造体として図1(a)及び(b)に示すようなハニカム状構造体1を用いて触媒コンバータを作製する場合を例に、本発明を更に詳細に説明するが、本発明はこれらの実施例に限定されるものではない。

ハニカム状構造体へ文字やバーコードなどの情報を表示する方法としては、インクジェット印字装置による方法とレーザー装置による方法が印字速度が速く非接触であり、多量部材を処理する上で望ましい。特にレーザーによる表示方法は、インクを必要とせず、予め前処理も不要なので、メンテナンスの観点からインクジェット方法よりも好ましい。

ハニカム状構造体の寸法検査は、ハニカム状構造体の製造工程の最後に行われるが、そこで検査測定された外径寸法情報が測定機器からレーザーマーカー装置

に直接に伝達されるようにしておく。図2に示すように、測定機器を出てきたハニカム状構造体1は次にレーザーマーカー装置3に送られて、同時に送られてきた外径寸法情報に基づいて、ハニカム状構造体1の外表面にバーコードがマーキングされる。QRコードはマーキング面積が小さいので、マーキング時間が短くてすみ、また、ハニカム状構造体外表面の曲率の影響を受けにくいのでより適している。

以下にレーザーマーキング条件の一例を記す。なお、レーザーマーカー装置としてはYAGパルスレーザー装置あるいはCO2炭酸ガスレーザー装置が適している。

・レーザーマーカー装置:

YAGレーザーマーカー装置 (ミヤチテクノス(株)製ランプ励起式ML-4141B)

・ハニカム状構造体:

コージェライト質ハニカム状構造体(隔壁 $2 \, \mathrm{mil} \, 1$ 、セル密度 $9 \, 0 \, 0 \, \mathrm{cpsi}$ 、ノミナル外径 $\phi \, 1 \, 0 \, 6 \, \mathrm{mm}$ 、長さ $1 \, 1 \, 4 \, \mathrm{mm}$)

・マーキング条件:

電流値17A、Q. SW周波数8kHz、スキャンスピード150~1000mm/s

・バーコードの種類:

CODE39あるいはQRコード、CODE39のナロー幅0.38mm、QRコードのセルサイズ0.508mm

バーコードに載せる情報:

ハニカム状構造体の外径実測平均寸法

このようなレーザーマーキング条件により、製造工程でバーコードをマーキングされたセラミック製ハニカム状構造体は、次に、触媒成分の担持工程に送られる。そして、当該担持行程にて、触媒担持装置内に搬送されたハニカム状構造体に、触媒成分の担持が行われる。

なお、別のマーキング方法として、インクジェットによる場合及びスタンピン

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グによる場合の条件の例を以下に記す。

[インクジェットの例]

・インクジェット装置: イマージェ社S4プラス

・インクの種類:

耐熱性インク(常温:こげ茶色、熱処理後:橙色)

- ・ハニカム状構造体:
- コージェライト質ハニカム状構造体(隔壁2mil、セル密度900cpsi、ノミナル外径φ106mm、長さ114mm)
- ・ハニカム状構造体に載せる情報の形態: 数字
- ・ハニカム状構造体に載せる情報:

ハニカム状構造体の外径実測平均寸法(strikethrough:及び実測質量値)

このような条件で印字した後、マーキングした情報よりも縦横約5mm大きい枠を作成して、当該枠内に次の条件でオーバーコートを施し、ハニカム状構造体に触媒成分を担持した後、画像解析による情報の認識が可能であるかを調べた。また、比較としてオーバーコートを施さないものも供試した。その結果、オーバーコートを施さないもの、特にまだら状に着色されたものは、画像解析では認識できず、識字率は約60%であったが、オーバーコートを施したものは、いずれも触媒成分を含む水溶液の担持工程で、情報がマーキングされた外壁に触媒が浸透してこなかったため、情報が鮮明に残り、画像解析による数字認識率が100%であった。

(条件1)

- ・オーバーコート材料:透明塗料(アサヒペン、アクリル樹脂)
- ・塗布条件: スプレー約2秒

(条件2)

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- ・オーバーコート材料: 日産化学シリカゾル
- ・塗布条件:2回塗布

(条件3)

- ・オーバーコート材料:シリカ粉末を水で溶いたもの
- ・塗布条件: 2回塗布

[スタンピングの例]

酸化コバルト($C\circ O$)、酸化クロム(Cr_2O_3)、酸化鉄(Fe_2O_3)微粉末40%(色は常温・熱処理後も黒色)

・合成樹脂: 50%

・インク顔料:

・水:

10%

・ハニカム状構造体: コージェライト質ハニカム状構造体(隔壁2mil、セル密度900cpsi、ノミナル外径φ106mm、長さ114mm)

・ハニカム状構造体に載せる情報の形態: 数字

・ハニカム状構造体に載せる情報:

ハニカム状構造体の外径実測平均寸法 (strikethrough:及び実測質量値)

このような条件でインク材料をスタンプ台に溶いてゴム印でハニカム状構造体に情報を捺印した。また、捺印後、前記インクジェットの場合と同様、オーバーコートも実施し、オーバーコートを施したものと施さないものとの両方に触媒成分を担持した後、画像解析による情報の認識が可能であるかどうかを調べた。本

例では、黒褐色の触媒成分を用いて触媒担時を実施したが、オーバーコートを施さず、まだら状に着色された場合でも、画像解析で認識できなかったのは捺印がかすれたものについてのみであり、その認識率は約96%であった。また、オーバーコートを施したものは、いずれも識字率が100%であった。

触媒成分が担持されたハニカム状構造体は、触媒焼付け工程に搬送され、ここで400~800℃の高温下で処理される。ハニカム状構造体に表記される情報が、触媒成分の担持あるいは焼付け工程におけるハニカム状構造体の変色により、読み取れなくなったり、あるいは焼失したりすることが懸念されるため、インクジェット方法を用いる場合には耐熱性インクを使用することが望ましい。

一般には、ハニカム状構造体の外表面には、マスキングにより触媒成分は担持されないので、マーキングされたバーコード等の表記が触媒成分で埋没することはないが、若干の変色は避けられないので、読み取りが可能なようにバーコード等のマーキング条件を設定することが必要である。レーザーマーキングの場合には、部材の表面を非常に浅い領域で分解除去しているので、触媒成分の担持工程を通過して触媒成分が担持されたハニカム状構造体は、次にキャニング工程へ搬送される。

キャニング工程では、予め、ハニカム状構造体の外径寸法情報の載っているバーコードがバーコードリーダーで読み取られる。その読み取られた寸法情報は、金属容器の製造ラインに瞬時に伝達される。金属容器は、薄い金属板を所定寸法になるようにプレス治具を使って丸めて、繋ぎ目を溶接により接合して缶体に形成される。この缶体製造装置に前記の情報が伝達されて、その情報に基づいて缶体の寸法が決定される。このようにして、ハニカム状構造体と金属容器(缶体)の間のクリアランスが制御され、最適な組み合わせが実現される。

ハニカム状構造体と金属容器の間に介在する圧縮性材料の嵩密度によっても面圧が変動するので、ハニカム状構造体と金属容器間のクリアランスと圧縮性材料の嵩密度の最適な組み合わせが得られるように、ハニカム状構造体のバーコード情報に基づいて、金属容器と圧縮性材料を選定することもできる。バーコードの代わりに文字を情報伝達手段とする方法も一般的に知られている。

文字情報もインクジェット方法あるいはレーザーマーキング方法により印字することができる。この場合に、印字された文字情報はCCDカメラで撮影され、パターンマッチング方法で認識される。この方法は予め文字を登録しておき、撮影した文字の濃淡情報から登録した文字にもっとも近いパターンを選択する方法である。本発明者らは、先のレーザーマーキング方法で表記された外径寸法と質量の数字情報についてオムロン製F350画像認識装置で読み取りを行い、間違いなく情報伝達ができることを確認した。

バーコードリーダーの読み取り原理は、レーザー光をバーコードラベル上に照射して、その乱反射光をバーコードリーダーの受光部で受光する。その乱反射光はスペースとバーの反射率の差により強弱が発生するので、これをON/OFFのデジタル信号に変換することで、スペースとバーを判別して読み取っている。したがって、バーコードでも乱反射光の強弱の差(PCS)が小さくなってしまう場合には、バーコードリーダーでの読み取りが困難となるので、前述の画像認識処理方法が有効となる。

一般的なキャニングの方法としては、図3に示すクラムシェル方法、図4に示す押し込み方法、あるいは図5に示す巻き絞め方法のうちのいずれかの方法が用いられる。また、この他に、金属塑性加工技術を応用して、図6のように、金属容器5の外径寸法を外部からタップ(加圧型)11を介して圧縮圧力を加えることにより絞ったり、図7のように、一方の開口端近傍の内周部にテーパを設けた治具12に押し込むことにより金属容器5の外径寸法を絞ったりする縮管方法も行われている。

更には、図8に示すように、金属容器5を回転させながら、その外周面を加工 治具13を用いて塑性加工により絞り込む方法(いわゆる回転鍛造方法)で、金 属容器5の外径を絞り、面圧を付与することも可能である。この方法を利用すれ ば、最近行われている缶体の両端をスピニング加工により絞り込んでコーン形状 にすることとの組み合わせで、一貫した加工ラインでキャニングからコーン形成 までが可能となる。

前記クラムシェル方法、押し込み方法、巻き絞め方法は、それぞれ図3~5に

示すように、予めハニカム状構造体1に圧縮弾性把持材(圧縮性材料)7を巻いておくもので、クラムシェル方法は、図3のように、それを2分割された金属容器5a、5bで負荷を与えながら挟み込み、それらの合わせ面(つば)の個所を溶接することで一体化容器とする。押し込み方法は、図4のように、ガイド9を利用して一体金属容器5内に圧入する。巻き絞め方法は、図5のように、金属容器となる金属板5°を巻き付けて引っ張ることで面圧を付与し、金属板5°の合わせ部を溶接して固定する。

クラムシェル方法によれば、上下面から金属容器で押え込む際にマット(圧縮性材料)のズレが起こり、押し込み方法では、金属容器に挿入する際に挿入側でマットのズレが起こる。このため、ズレた部位が広範囲に及ぶと全体的にも面圧が高くなってしまう。

面圧を付与するのに適した方法は、できる限りマットと金属容器との相対的な位置のズレを起こさないで、金属容器内においてハニカム状構造体に面圧を付与して把持することである。この観点から、巻き絞め方法、縮管方法、及び回転鍛造方法は、面圧を付与する前に、予め缶体が圧縮性材料で包まれたセル構造体を取り囲んだ状態となっているので、缶体と圧縮性材料との相対的な位置のズレが小さく、望ましいものである。なお、押し込み方法は、ハニカム状構造体を缶体内に配置する方法としてのみ利用し、面圧を付与する手段には縮管方法あるいは回転鍛造方法を用いることも可能である。

また、触媒成分の担持前に金属容器内にハニカム状構造体を把持してから、金属容器内のハニカム状構造体に触媒成分を担持する方法もあり得る。この方法によれば、触媒成分の担持工程中に、ハニカム状構造体が欠けたり、破損したりするのを回避することができる。

産業上の利用可能性

以上説明したように、本発明によれば、セル構造体を圧縮性材料を介して金属 容器内に収納把持したアッセンブリを組み立てる際に、当該アッセンブリを構成 するセル構造体等の部材の外形寸法などにバラツキがあっても、その影響を抑え 、セル構造体の破損等の無い適切な把持状態が容易に得られる。

17

請 求 の 範 囲

1. セル構造体の外周部と筒状の金属容器との間にクッション性を有する圧縮性材料を圧縮状態で配し、前記セル構造体へ前記圧縮性材料を介して圧縮面圧を付与することで、前記セル構造体を前記金属容器内に把持することにより、セル構造体を圧縮性材料を介して金属容器内に収納把持したアッセンブリを組み立てる方法において、

組み立て工程に入る前に予め前記セル構造体の外径寸法及び/又は前記金属容器の内径寸法に関する情報をその部材表面上に表示しておき、組み立て工程において、前記情報を読み取り、その情報に基づいて、適切な把持条件となるセル構造体と金属容器とを選び出すことを特徴とする組み立て方法。

2. セル構造体の外周部と筒状の金属容器との間にクッション性を有する圧縮性材料を圧縮状態で配し、前記セル構造体へ前記圧縮性材料を介して圧縮面圧を付与することで、前記セル構造体を前記金属容器内に把持することにより、セル構造体を圧縮性材料を介して金属容器内に収納把持したアッセンブリを組み立てる方法において、

組み立て工程に入る前に予め前記セル構造体の外径寸法に関する情報をその部 材表面上に表示しておき、組み立て工程において、前記情報を読み取り、その情 報に基づいて、適切な把持条件となるように金属容器を製造して前記セル構造体 と組み合わせることを特徴とする組み立て方法。

- 3. 前記情報の表示形式が文字である請求項1又は2に記載の組み立て方法。
- 4. 前記情報の表示形式がバーコードである請求項1又は2に記載の組み立て方法。
- 5. 前記情報を2種類の表示形式で表示する請求項1又は2に記載の組み立て方法。
- 6. 前記情報を文字とバーコードとの両方の表示形式で表示する請求項1又は2に記載の組み立て方法。
- 7. 前記情報をインクにより表示する請求項3ないし6のいずれか1項に記載

の組み立て方法。

- 8. 前記情報を耐熱性インクにより表示する請求項3ないし6のいずれか1項に記載の組み立て方法。
- 9. 前記情報を2種類のインクにより表示する請求項3ないし6のいずれか1項に記載の組み立て方法。
- 10. 前記情報を耐熱性インクと耐熱性のないインクとの両方により表示する 請求項3ないし6のいずれか1項に記載の組み立て方法。
- 11. 前記情報をインクにより表示する方法が、インクジェット方法又は熱転 写方法である請求項7ないし10のいずれか1項に記載の組み立て方法。
- 12. 前記情報をレーザーにより表示する請求項3ないし6のいずれか1項に記載の組み立て方法。
- 13. 前記情報をサンドプラストにより表示する請求項3ないし6のいずれか1項に記載の組み立て方法。
- 14. 前記情報を化学的な腐食作用により表示する請求項3ないし6のいずれか1項に記載の組み立て方法。
- 15. 前記情報をスタンプで押印することにより表示する請求項3ないし6のいずれか1項に記載の組み立て方法。
- 16. 前記情報をラベルに印刷して前記部材表面上に貼付することにより表示する請求項3ないし6のいずれか1項に記載の組み立て方法。
- 17. 前記情報を2種類の表示方法で表示する請求項3ないし6のいずれか1項に記載の組み立て方法。
- 18. 前記情報をインクジェット方法又は熱転写方法とスタンプで押印する方法との両方の表示方法で表示する請求項3ないし6のいずれか1項に記載の組み立て方法。
- 19. 前記情報を表示した後、表示された情報の上に透明な撥水性液を塗布する請求項7ないし11のいずれか1項に記載の組み立て方法。
- 20. 前記撥水性液が樹脂又はシリカゾルである請求項19記載の組み立て方法。

- 21. 前記クッション性を有する圧縮性材料が、金属製ワイヤメッシュ、セラミック繊維とバーミキュライトで構成される加熱膨張性マット、セラミック繊維を主成分としバーミキュライトを含まない非加熱膨張性マットからなる群より選ばれた1種の材料又は2種以上の複合材料である請求項1ないし20のいずれか1項に記載の組み立て方法。
- 22. 前記金属容器内への前記セル構造体の収納、及び前記セル構造体へ前記 圧縮性材料を介して圧縮面圧を付与する方法が、クラムシェル方法、押し込み方 法、巻き絞め方法、縮管方法、及び回転鍛造方法のうちのいずれかである請求項 1ないし21のいずれか1項に記載の組み立て方法。
- 23. 前記セル構造体に触媒成分を担持した後に、該セル構造体を前記金属容器内に収納把持してなる請求項1ないし22のいずれか1項に記載の組み立て方法。
- 24. 前記セル構造体を前記金属容器内に収納把持した後に、該セル構造体に 触媒成分を担持するようにした請求項1ないし22のいずれか1項に記載の組み 立て方法。
- 25. 請求項1ないし24のいずれか1項に記載の組み立て方法により組み立てられたアッセンブリ。
- 26. 自動車排ガス浄化用触媒コンバータとして用いられる請求項25記載のアッセンブリ。
- 27. 前記セル構造体が、複数の隔壁により形成された複数のセル通路とそれを取り囲む外周壁を有するハニカム状構造体である請求項25又は26に記載のアッセンブリ。
- 28. 前記セル構造体が、フォーム状構造体である請求項25又は26に記載のアッセンブリ。
- 29. 前記セル構造体が、コージェライト、アルミナ、ムライト、リチウム・アルミニウム・シリケート、チタン酸アルミニウム、チタニア、ジルコニア、窒化珪素、窒化アルミニウム及び炭化珪素からなる群より選ばれた1種のセラミック材料又は2種以上のセラミック材料の複合物からなるものである請求項25な

いし28のいずれか1項に記載のアッセンブリ。

- 30. 前記セル構造体が、活性炭、シリカゲル及びゼオライトからなる群より選ばれた1種の吸着材料からなるものである請求項25ないし28のいずれか1項に記載のアッセンブリ。
- 31. 複数のセル構造体を、セル通路方向に沿って1つの金属容器内にクッション性を有する圧縮性材料を介して直列に配列した請求項25ないし30のいずれか1項に記載のアッセンブリ。
- 32. 1つのセル構造体を1つの金属容器内にクッション性を有する圧縮性材料を介して収納把持したアッセンブリを複数個、セル構造体のセル通路方向に沿って、1つの金属外筒内に直列に配列した請求項25ないし30のいずれか1項に記載のアッセンブリ。
- 33. 請求項1ないし24のいずれか1項に記載の組み立て方法に用いられる前記情報が表示されたセル構造体。
- 34. 自動車排ガス浄化用触媒コンバータに用いられる請求項33記載のセル構造体。
- 35. 複数の隔壁により形成された複数のセル通路とそれを取り囲む外周壁を有するハニカム状構造体である請求項33又は34に記載のセル構造体。
- 36. フォーム状構造体である請求項33又は34に記載のセル構造体。
- 37. コージェライト、アルミナ、ムライト、リチウム・アルミニウム・シリケート、チタン酸アルミニウム、チタニア、ジルコニア、窒化珪素、窒化アルミニウム及び炭化珪素からなる群より選ばれた1種のセラミック材料又は2種以上のセラミック材料の複合物からなるものである請求項33ないし36のいずれか1項に記載のセル構造体。
- 38. 活性炭、シリカゲル及びゼオライトからなる群より選ばれた1種の吸着材料からなるものである請求項33ないし36のいずれか1項に記載のセル構造体。

図1(a)

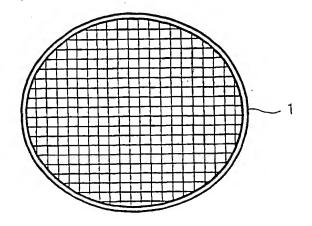


図1(b)

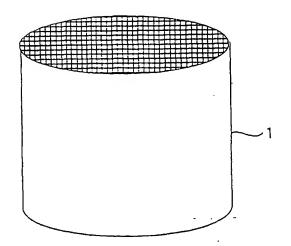
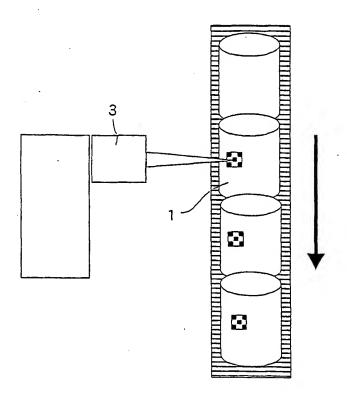


図2



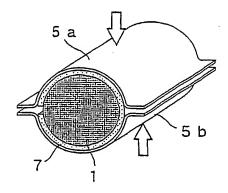
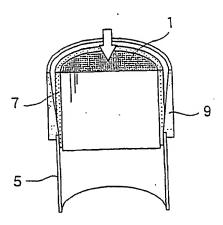


図4



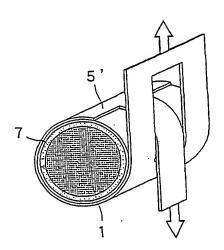
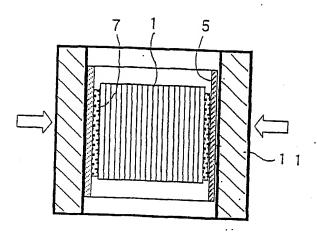
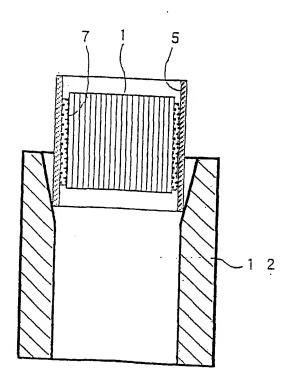
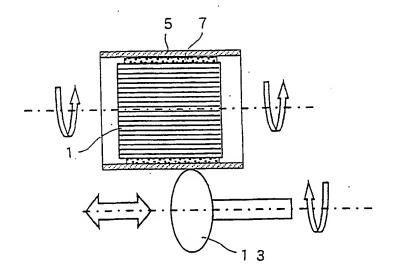


図6







INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

International application No.

A CTA	SSIEICA TION OF SUBMISSION	PCT/	JP01/10004
Int	SSIFICATION OF SUBJECT MATTER L.Cl ⁷ B23P 21/00, F01N 3/28		
According	7 to International Patent Classification (Inc.)		
B. FIEL	g to International Patent Classification (IPC) or to both national classific DS SEARCHED	cation and IPC	
Minimum	documentation searched (classification system followed)	On Cumbala)	
Int	E.Cl ⁷ B23P 21/00, F01N 3/28	on symbols)	
Document	ation searched other than minimum documentation to the extent that sur		
Jit	suyo Shinan Koho 1926–1996 Jitsuyo	ch documents are include Shinan Toroku	d in the fields searched
	13/1 2002 10F0ku	Jltsuyo Shinan	Koho 1994-2002
Electronic	data base consulted during the international search (name of data base a	and, where practicable, se	arch terms used)
		, was production, se	aron terms used)
C. DOCI	IMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT		
Category*			
Y Y	1 with indication, where appropriate, of the	e relevant passages	Relevant to claim No
*	JP 9-314431 A (Fuji Oozx, Inc.), 09 December, 1997 (09.12.1997),		1-38
	Full text (Family: none)		
Y	JP 2000-45759 A (NGK Insulators, Ltd.),		
	125 rebruary, 2000 (15.02.2000)		1-38
•	Full text		
	& DE 19934531 A1 & FR 2781389 A1		
Y	JP 11-258013 A (Gastar Corporation),		1-38
-	24 September, 1999 (24.09.1999), abstract; Par. Nos. [0037], [0038] (Fam		1-36
Y			
1	<pre>JP 63-7847 A (Toyota Motor Corporation), 13 January, 1988 (13.01.1988),</pre>		23
	page 2, lower left column, line 20 to lower	right golumn	
	line 7 (Family: none)	right column,	
Y	JP 7-47285 A (Toyota Motor Corporation),		
ļ			24
	Par. No. [0005] (Family: none)		
Further	documents are listed in the continuation of Box C. See patent		
Special of	categories of cited documente:	family annex.	
	and defining the general state of the art which is not red to be of particular relevance.		
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considere considere earlier de date documen	ocument but published on or after the international filing "X" document of twhich may throw doubts on priority claim(s) or which is stablish the publication date of court.	e and not in conflict with the the principle or theory under of particular relevance; the cli- novel or cannot be considere the document is taken alone	lying the invention aimed invention cannot be d to involve an inventive
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INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

International application No.

PCT/JP01/10004

Category*	Citation of document, with indication, where appropriate, of the relevant passages	Relevant to claim No
Y	JP 9-158720 A (Toyota Motor Corporation), 17 June, 1997 (17.06.1997), abstract (Family: none)	28,36
Y	EP 918145 A2 (Nissan Motor Co., Ltd.), 26 May, 1999 (26.05.1999), column 6, lines 45 to 52; Fig. 4 & JP 11-210451 A Par. No. [0036]	30,38
Y	JP 2000-291424 A (Honda Motor Co., Ltd.), 17 October, 2000 (17.10.2000), Par. Nos. [0007] to [0009]; Fig. 1 (Family: none)	31
Y	JP 2000-204931 A (Yamaha Motor Co., Ltd.), 25 July, 2000 (25.07.2000), Par. Nos. [0029] to [0030]; Fig. 2	32
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A. 発明の属する分野の分類(国際特許分類(IPC))

Int. C17 B23P 21/00, F01N 3/28.

B. 調査を行った分野

調査を行った最小限資料(国際特許分類(IPC))

Int. Cl B23P 21/00, F01N 3/28

最小限資料以外の資料で調査を行った分野に含まれるもの

日本国実用新案公報

1926-1996年

日本国公開実用新案公報

1971-2002年

日本国実用新案登録公報

1996-2002年

日本国登録実用新案公報

1994-2002年

国際調査で使用した電子データベース (データベースの名称、調査に使用した用語)

C. 関連すると認められる文献				
引用文献の カテゴリー*	引用文献名 及び一部の箇所が関連するときは、その関連する箇所の表示	関連する 請求の範囲の番号		
Y	JP 9-314431 A (フジオーゼックス株式会社) 199 7. 12. 09,全文 (ファミリーなし)	1-38		
Y	JP 2000-45759 A (日本碍子株式会社) 2000. 02. 15, 全文 & DE 19934531 A1 & FR 2781389 A1	1-38		
Y	JP 11-258013 A (株式会社ガスター) 1999.09.24, 【要約】, 段落【0037】, 【0038】 (ファミリーなし)	. 1 — 3 8		

区 C欄の続きにも文献が列挙されている。

□ パテントファミリーに関する別紙を参照。

- * 引用文献のカテゴリー・
- 「A」特に関連のある文献ではなく、一般的技術水準を示す
- 「E」国際出願日前の出願または特許であるが、国際出願日 以後に公表されたもの
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引用文献の カテゴリー*	引用文献名 及び一部の箇所が関連するときは、その関連する箇所の表示	関連する 請求の範囲の番号
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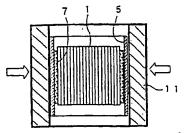
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(54) ASSEMBLY METHOD UTILIZING DISPLAY INFORMATION, AND ASSEMBLY FABRICATED BY THE ASSEMBLY METHOD

(57) An assembling method for an assembly is provided: the assembly comprising a cell structure (1) housed and held in a metal vessel (5) via a compressible material having a cushioning property (7) by arranging it between outer periphery of the structure (1) and the vessel (5) in a compressed state with applying a mounting pressure to the structure (1) via the material (7) to hold the structure (1) in the vessel (5). Information regarding outside dimension of the structure (1) and/or in-

side dimension of the vessel (5) being marked on their surfaces prior to the start of assembly, and the information is read, and a cell structure (1) and a metal vessel (5) are selected based on read information in assembly to achieve a proper holding condition therebetween. Regardless of variations in external dimension of the structure, etc. constituting the assembly, the minimization thereof, and proper holding state may be achieved easily without causing a fracture of the structure, etc:





Description

Technical Field

[0001] The present invention relates to an assembling method for an assembly in which a cell structure is housed and held in a metal vessel via a compressible material. More particularly, it relates to an assembling method for an assembly of members meeting a proper combination condition by marking inherent information on the surface of a member constituting the assembly in advance and by utilizing the information. The present invention can be applied to a carrier or filter for purification or deodorization of exhaust gas of internal combustion engine, a carrier or filter for chemical reaction equipment utilizing catalytic action, for example, such as a reformer for fuel cell, and the like.

Background Art

[0002] There is known, as an assembly used for a catalytic converter or a filter for purification of exhaust gas of internal combustion engine or chemical reaction equipment utilizing catalytic action, a heat exchanger, or the like, said assembly comprising a cell structure being housed and held (canned) in a metal vessel by placing a compressible material having a cushioning property between the cell structure and the tubular metal vessel (can), with applying a predetermined mounting pressure to the cell structure via the compressible material.

[0003] For example, in the case where such an assembly is used as a catalytic converter for purifying automobile exhaust gas, a precious metal such as platinum, palladium, or rhodium is dispersedly carried on a ceramic honeycomb structure, which is one kind of cell structure, as a catalyst component, and the honeycomb structure carrying the precious metal is housed and held in a metal vessel (can) via a ceramic mat etc. and is mounted on an exhaust system.

[0004] It is desirable that the cell structure has a high strength because it is held in the metal vessel with applying a mounting pressure onto the outer peripheral surface thereof as described above. For the honeycomb structure used as a catalyst carrier for purifying automobile exhaust gas, however, the thinning of cell wall is now in progress for the improvement in the purification performance, and accordingly the strength level is being lowered.

[0005] The strength of cell structure can be measured by an "isostatic fracture strength test". This test is conducted by putting a cell structure in a tubular rubber vessel, placing a cover of aluminum plate on the vessel; and performing isostatic compressing in water; which simulates the compressive load in the case where the outer peripheral surface of cell structure is held by the can of converter. The isostatic strength is shown by a pressure value applied thereto at the time when the cell

structure is fractured, and is specified in Automobile Standards JASO Standards M505-87 issued by Society of Automotive Engineers of Japan, Inc.

[0006] It has been found that it is generally very difficult for a ceramic honeycomb structure used as a catalyst carrier for an automobile exhaust gas purifying converter to keep an isostatic strength of 10 kg/cm² or higher if the cell wall thickness is 0.11 mm or smaller and the open frontal area ratio in the terms of percentage exceeds 85%.

[0007] In the case where a specific pressure higher than a design specific pressure set at the time of canning design is produced in actual canning and the specific pressure exceeds the isostatic strength of cell structure in some portion, there is a danger that the structure fractures in that portion. As the thickness of cell wall of cell structure becomes thinner and thus the strength level of structure is lowered, the design specific pressure must be lowered, and thus it is necessary to restrain an abnormal rise in specific pressure in actual canning and to reduce the variations in specific pressure as much as possible. If the actual specific pressure is equal to the design specific pressure, intended canning design can be made ideally.

the case where because a gap between the cell structure and the metal vessel for containing the cell structure is irregular due to poor accuracy of external shape of cell structure, the compressive pressure acting on the outer peripheral portion of cell structure is nonuniform, so that a high holding specific pressure acts partially. [0009] On the other hand, if the specific pressure is decreased too much, the cell structure cannot be kept being held in the metal vessel because the cell structure is subjected to a high-temperature exhaust gas flow or vibrations in actual service environments. Therefore, the necessary minimum specific pressure exists. As the wall thickness of cell structure decreases, the isostatic strength level of cell structure decreases, so that the mounting pressure for holding the cell structure must also be decreased to the utmost while the minimum spe-

cific pressure necessary for holding the cell structure is maintained. As the level of mounting pressure decreases, variations in specific pressure must be decreased, that is, more even specific pressure distribution must be provided.

[00101] In order to house and hold the cell structure is

[0010] In order to house and hold the cell structure in the metal vessel in a proper state, it is desirable to decrease the variations in size and shape of the cell structure to the utmost. However, since the ceramic honeycomb structure used as a catalyst carrier as described above is dried as it is after being extrusion molded, and after being cut to a predetermined length, it is housed in the metal vessel in a state of being fired, the outside-diameter dimension of honeycomb structure involves dimensional variations and deformations in all processes of molding, drying, and firing. Therefore, the honeycomb structure has very large variations in size and shape as

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compared with a metal work.

[0011] In some cases, in a large-size honeycomb structure, the outer peripheral portion thereof is machined and removed after firing, and then the outer periphery is covered with ceramic cement. In general, however, the ceramic honeycomb structure is put to practical use without machining the outer peripheral portion thereof after firing. Therefore, studies have been carried out to increase the accuracy of outside diameter of ceramic honeycomb structure, and on the other hand, the problem is how the influence of outside-diameter dimension of ceramic honeycomb structure is kept little when the honeycomb structure is housed in the metal vessel. [0012] The present invention has been made to solve the above problems, and accordingly an object thereof is to provide an assembling method in which when an assembly produced by housing and holding a cell structure in a metal vessel via a compressible material, even if the external-shape dimension of member such as the cell structure constituting the assembly has variations. the influence of variations is averted, and a proper holding state without a fracture etc. of cell structure can be obtained.

Disclosure of the Invention

[0013] According to the present invention, there is provided an assembling method, as a first aspect of the present invention, for an assembly wherein a cell structure is housed and held in a metal vessel via a compressible material having a cushioning property by holding said cell structure with said compressible material. with placing said compressible material between the outer periphery of said cell structure and said tubular metal vessel in a compressed state so as to apply a mounting pressure to said cell structure via said compressible material, characterized by

marking information regarding the outside dimension of said cell structure and/or the inside dimension of said metal vessel on the surface of a member of the assembly prior to the start of an assembling process.

reading said information, and

selecting a cell structure and a metal vessel so as to achieve a proper holding condition therebetween based on the read information in the assembling process.

[0014] Also, according to the present invention, there is provided an assembling method, as a second aspect of the present invention, for an assembly wherein a cell structure is housed and held in a metal vessel via a compressible material having a cushioning property by holding said cell structure with said compressible material, with placing said compressible material between the outer periphery of said cell structure and said tubular metal vessel in a compressed state so as to apply a mounting pressure to said cell structure via said compressible material, characterized by marking information regarding the outside dimension of said cell structure.

ture on the surface of a member of assembly prior to the start of an assembling process, reading said information, manufacturing a metal vessel so as to achieve a proper holding condition between said cell structure based on the read information, and combining thus formed metal vessel with said cell structure.

[0015] Further, according to the present invention, there is provided an assembly, as a third aspect of the present invention, assembled by either of the above-described methods.

[0016] Still further, according to the present invention, there is provided a cell structure, as a fourth aspect of the present invention, on which the information used in either of the above-described method is marked.

Brief Description of the Drawings

[0017]

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Figures 1(a) and 1(b) are explanatory views showing a honeycomb structure used as a cell structure in an embodiment, Figure 1(a) being a plan view, and Figure 1(b) being a perspective view. Figure 2 is an explanatory view showing a marking method for a bar code by using a laser marker. Figure 3 is an explanatory view showing a case where a honeycomb structure is housed and held in a metal vessel by using the clamshell method. Figure 4 is an explanatory view showing a case where a honeycomb structure is housed and held in a metal vessel by using the stuffing method. Figure 5 is an explanatory view showing a case where a honeycomb structure is housed and held in a metal vessel by using the tourniquet method. Figure 6 is an explanatory view showing a case where a honeycomb structure is housed and held in a metal vessel by using the shrinking method. Figure 7 is an explanatory view showing a case where a honeycomb structure is housed and held in a metal vessel by using the shrinking method. Figure 8 is an explanatory view showing a case where a honeycomb structure is housed and held in a metal vessel by using the rotary forging method.

Best Mode for Carrying Out the Invention

[0018] As described above, an assembly used for a catalytic converter or the like, in which a cell structure is housed and held in a metal vessel via a compressible material, is assembled by arranging the compressible material having a cushioning property between the outer periphery of cell structure and the tubular metal vessel in a compressed state and by applying a mounting pressure to the cell structure via the compressible material to hold the cell structure in the metal vessel.

[0019] A first aspect of the present invention has a feature described below. In the above-described assembling method for the assembly, information regard-

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ing the outside-diameter dimension of the cell structure and/or the inside-diameter dimension of the metal vessel has been marked on the member surface prior to the start of an assembling process, and in the assembling process, the information is read, and a cell structure and a metal vessel which have a proper holding condition are selected based on the read information.

[0020] By selecting a cell structure and a metal vessel which provide a proper combination of dimensions from the information regarding the outside-diameter dimension of cell structure and/or the inside-diameter dimension of metal vessel marked on the member surface as described above, a specific pressure is applied to the cell structure housed and held in the metal vessel in a proper range.

[0021] A second aspect of the present invention has a feature described below. In the above-described assembling method for the same assembly as described above, information regarding the outside-diameter dimension of the cell structure has been marked on the member surface prior to the start of an assembling process, and in the assembling process, the information is read, and a metal vessel is manufactured so as to have a proper holding condition based on the read information and combined with the cell structure.

[0022] By manufacturing a metal vessel having a proper inside-diameter dimension corresponding to the external-shape dimension of cell structure from the information regarding the inherent outside-diameter dimension of individual cell structure which is marked on the member surface and by combining the metal vessel with the cell structure as described above, a specific pressure is applied to the cell structure housed and held in the metal vessel in a proper range.

[0023] In the first and second aspects of the present invention, as a format for marking information, characters or a bar code may be used. The information may be marked by using two kinds of marking formats; for example, both formats for marking characters and a bar code may be used. Also, the information may be marked by ink application, laser, sandblasting, chemical corroding action, stamping using a stamp, or other means. Alternatively, the information may be printed on a label, and the label may be affixed onto the member surface. In the case where the information is marked by ink, the ink jet method or thermal transfer method is preferably used.

[0024] Regarding the marking method for the information as well, two kinds of methods may be used in combination with each other. For example, both marking methods of the ink jet method or thermal transfer method and the stamping method may be used in combination with each other. Also, in the case where the information is marked by ink, two kinds of inks, for example, thermally resistant ink and non-thermally resistant ink may be used in combination with each other as necessary.

[0025] In the case where the assembly assembled by

the method in accordance with the present invention is one in which a catalyst component is carried on the cell structure as in the case of catalytic converter, after the information is marked, lacquer, paraffin, resin such as vinyl, or a transparent water-repellent liquid such as silica sol is preferably applied onto the marked information.

[0026] The cell structure serving as a carrier is mainly colored various shades of blown ranging from liver brown to black depending on the kind and concentration of catalyst component after the catalyst component is carried. Also, the cell structure is heat-treated at a temperature of 400 to 800°C to be baked to fix the catalyst component to the carrier. Therefore, in the case where the information is marked by ink, thermally resistant ink is used. Also, since the catalyst component is generally made a water solution to be carried on the carrier, it is desirable that the carrier (cell structure) have some degree of water absorbing property, so that a carrier made of a material having a porosity of about 20 to 40% is usually used.

[0027] If a catalyst is carried by pouring a water solution containing a catalyst component into through holes in the cell structure under such a condition without applying the aforementioned water-repellent liquid on the marked information, the water solution seeps to the outer peripheral wall of cell structure through communicating pores by means of the capillary phenomenon, so that a portion on the outer peripheral surface in which the information is marked is also colored. The kind of the thermally resistant ink is limited; the thermally resistant ink having a bright color is not available, and the color of most thermally resistant inks turns to a brown shade which is the same as the color of catalyst component after heat treatment. Therefore, if the portion in which the information is marked is also colored, the information becomes illegible. Especially when the portion is not colored uniformly, but is colored in a spotted manner, the information cannot be read by a reading method requiring brightness such as image analysis.

[0028] Contrarily, if the aforementioned water-repellent liquid is applied onto the marked information, the water-repellent liquid intrudes in the surface of marked portion and pores in the material, and repels the water solution seeping out to the outer peripheral wall by means of the capillary phenomenon and the water solution dripping onto the surface of outer peripheral wall. Therefore, the coloration of information marking portion is prevented, so that a legible state can be maintained. [0029] The thermally resistant component of thermally resistant ink is a pigment (mineral powder). In the case where thermally resistant ink is used for ink jet, the particle size of the pigment thereof must be made small, and further the content of pigment cannot be increased, so that the print is light. In the case of stamping, the content of pigment can be increased as compared with the case of ink jet, so that the stamped print is thick and dark, and thus contrast is secured. As a result, the seep-

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ing of catalyst component is prevented, so that the legibility can be enhanced.

[0030] In the case of stamping, however, stamping is performed mechanically, which presents a drawback in that much time is taken as compared with the case of ink jet. Therefore, in some cases, it is favorable that printing is performed by ink jet on a high-speed line, and stamping is performed on another line. In this case, in the case where thermal resistance is needed finally, if the ink used for stamping is made thermally resistant, the ink used for ink jet need not necessarily be thermally resistant.

[0031] As the compressible material having a cushioning property, one kind of material or a composite material consisting of two or more kinds of materials selected from a group consisting of a metallic wire mesh, an intumescent mat formed by ceramic fiber and vermiculite, and non-intumescent mat containing ceramic fibers as a major component, but free from vermiculite is preferably used.

[0032] Especially when the cell structure is a thin wall construction, if a non-intumescent mat containing, as a major component, ceramic fibers being made of alumina, high alumina, mullite, silicon carbide, silicon nitride, zirconia, titania, and the like, but being free from a thermally expansive material such as vermiculite is used, a compressive force acting on the outer periphery of cell structure in the practical temperature range does not vary greatly, and moreover the compressive force preferably acts on the whole of the outer periphery of cell structure substantially uniformly.

[0033] As a method for housing the cell structure in the metal vessel and applying a mounting pressure to the cell structure via the compressible material, any of the clamshell method, stuffing method, tourniquet method, shrinking method, and rotary forging method is preferably used.

[0034] As a cell structure, a honeycomb structure having a plurality of cell passages formed by a plurality of walls, the thickness of cell wall being 0.11 mm or smaller, and the open area percentage being 85% or more, is preferable. Further, as a honeycomb structure, a structure having an external wall forming an outside-diameter contour around the structure, the thickness of external wall being at least 0.05 mm, is preferable. As a cell structure used in the present invention, in addition to the above-described honeycomb structure, a foamed structure may be used.

[0035] The cell structure is preferably formed of one kind of ceramic material or a composite consisting of two or more kinds of ceramic materials selected from a group consisting of cordierite, alumina, mullite, lithium aluminum silicate, aluminum titanate, titania, zirconia, silicon nitride, aluminum nitride, and silicon carbide. Also, the cell structure formed of one kind of adsorbing material selected from a group consisting of activated carbon, silica gel, and zeolite can be used suitably.

[0036] The cell shape of honeycomb structure manu-

factured by extrusion molding may be triangular, quadrangular, hexagonal, round, etc. Generally, the honeycomb structure having a square shape, which is one of quadrangular shapes, is often used, and in recent years, the honeycomb structure having a hexagonal shape has been used increasingly.

[0037] In the case where the cell structure is used as a catalytic converter, a catalyst component must be carried on the cell structure. Usually, after the catalyst component is carried on the cell structure, the cell structure is housed and held in the metal vessel. However, the method may be such that after the cell structure is housed and held in the metal vessel, the catalyst component is carried on the cell structure.

[0038] A third aspect of the present invention provides an assembly assembled by the method in accordance with the first or second aspect of the present invention. Since the cell structure is held in the metal vessel with a proper mounting pressure, the assembly can be used suitably for a catalytic converter for purifying automobile exhaust gas and other applications. Also, a fourth aspect of the present invention provides a cell structure before assembling on which the information used in the method in accordance with the first or second aspect of the present invention is marked, on which the information is marked in advance with various formats and means, by which the assembling method in accordance with the first or second aspect of the present invention is carried out based on the information.

[0039] The assembly may be constructed so that a plurality of cell structures are arranged in series along the cell passage direction in one metal vessel via a compressible material having a cushioning property. Also, a plurality of assemblies each of which houses and holds one cell structure in one metal vessel via a compressible material having a cushioning property are arranged in series along the cell passage direction of the cell structure in one metallic outer casing. In the present invention, however, the size of metal vessel is changed according to the outside-diameter dimension of individual honeycomb structure. Therefore, in the case where a plurality of metal vessels are connected to each other, it is desirable to connect the metal vessels that have a size as close as possible to each other.

[Example]

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[0040] Hereunder, the present invention will be described in detail giving an example of the case where a catalytic converter is manufactured by using a honeycomb structure 1 shown in Figures 1(a) and 1(b) as a cell structure. The present invention is not limited to this example.

[0041] As a method for marking information such as characters or a bar code on a honeycomb structure, a method using an ink jet printer is desirable in terms of treatment of large quantities of members because this method has a high printing speed and is of non-contact

type. In particular, a marking method using a laser is preferable to the ink jet method in terms of maintenance because this method does not require ink and pretreatment.

[0042] The dimensional inspection of honeycomb structure is carried out at the final stage of manufacturing process of honeycomb structure. The configuration is made in advance such that the information about the outside-diameter dimension measured in the inspection is sent directly to a laser marker. As shown in Figure 2, the honeycomb structure 1 coming out of a measuring device is conveyed to the laser marker 3 and is marked with a bar code on the external surface of the honeycomb structure 1 based on the information about the outside-diameter dimension. The QR code is suitable because the marking area is small, so that the marking time is short, and also this code is less affected by the curvature of external surface of honeycomb structure. [0043] One example of laser marking conditions will be described below. As a laser marker, a YAG pulse laser or a CO₂ laser is suitable.

Laser marker:

YAG laser marker (lamp excited type ML-4141B manufactured by Miyachi Technos Corp.)

Honeycomb structure:

Cordielite honeycomb structure (wall thickness: 2 mil, cell density: 900 cpsi, nominal outside diameter: 106 mm, length: 114 mm)

Marking conditions:

Current: 17A, SW frequency: 8 kHz, scanning speed 150 to 1000 mm/s

· Type of bar code:

CODE 39 or QR code, narrow width of CODE 39: 0.38 mm, cell size of QR code: 0.508 mm

Information carried on bar code:

Actually measured average dimension of outside diameter of honeycomb structure

[0044] The ceramic honeycomb structure having been marked with a bar code under the above-described laser marking conditions in the manufacturing process is sent to a catalyst component carrying process. In this process, a catalyst component is carried on the honeycomb structure conveyed in a catalyst carrying device.

[0045] Examples of conditions in the cases of ink jet and stamping carried out as another marking method

will be described below.

[Example of ink jet]

5 [0046]

Ink jet device:

S4 Plus manufactured by Imaje Ltd.

Type of ink:

Thermally resistant ink (at ordinary temperature: dark brown colored, after heat treatment: orange colored)

Honeycomb structure:

Cordielite honeycomb structure (wall thickness: 2 mil, cell density: 900 cpsi, nominal outside diameter: 106 mm, length: 114 mm)

Format of information carried on honeycomb structure:

Numeral

Information carried on honeycomb structure:

Actually measured average dimension of outside diameter of honeycomb structure (strike-through: and actually measured mass)

[0047] After numerals were printed under the abovedescribed conditions, a frame larger than the marked information by about 5 mm in length and breadth was prepared, and an overcoat was applied in the frame under the following conditions. After a catalyst component was carried on the honeycomb structure, it was checked whether the information could be recognized by image analysis. Also, for comparison, a honeycomb structure in which the overcoat was not applied was examined. As a result, for the honeycomb structure to which the overcoat was not applied, especially the informationmarking portion is colored in a spotted manner, the information could not be recognized, the letter recognition percentage being 60%. On the other hand, for the honeycomb structure to which the overcoat was applied, since a catalyst did not seep to the external wall marked with information in the carrying process in which a water solution containing a catalyst component was carried, the information remained clearly, the percentage of recognizing numerals by means of image analysis being 100%.

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(Condition 1)

[0048]

Overcoat material:

Transparent paint (acrylic resin, manufactured by Asahipen Corp.)

Application condition:

Spraying for about 2 seconds

(Condition 2)

[0049]

Overcoat material:

Silica gel manufactured by Nissan Chemical Industries, Ltd.

· Application condition:

Applied two times

(Condition 3)

[0050]

Overcoat material:

Substance obtained by dissolving silica powder in water

Application condition:

Applied two times

[Example of stamping]

[0051]

Ink pigment:

Fine powder of cobalt oxide (CoO), chromium oxide (Cr_2O_3), and iron oxide (Fe_2O_3) 40% (color: black at ordinary temperature and after heat treatment)

Synthetic resin:

50%

Water:

10%

· Honeycomb structure:

Cordielite honeycomb structure (wall thickness: 2 mil, cell density: 900 cpsi, nominal outside diameter: 106 mm, length: 114 mm)

Format of information carried on honeycomb structure:

10 Numeral

Information carried on honeycomb structure:

Actually measured average dimension of outside diameter of honeycomb structure (strikethrough: and actually measured mass)

[0052] Under the above-described conditions, an ink material was dissolved and put in a stamp pad, and the information was stamped on the honeycomb structure using a rubber stamp. After stamping was performed, as in the case of the ink jet, an overcoat was applied. After a catalyst component was carried on both of the honevcomb structure to which the overcoat was applied and the honeycomb structure to which the overcoat was not applied, it was checked whether the information could be recognized by image analysis. In this example, the catalyst carrying was performed by using a blackish brown colored catalyst component. Even when the overcoat was not applied, and the information marked portion is colored in a spotted manner, only blurredly stamped letters could not be recognized by image analysis, the recognition percentage being about 96%. Also, for the honeycomb structure to which the overcoat was applied, the letter recognition percentage was 100%. [0053] The honeycomb structure on which the cata-

lyst component is carried was conveyed to a catalyst baking process, and is treated at a temperature of 400 to 800°C in this process. There is a fear that the information marked on the honeycomb structure is made illegible or is lost by heat due to the discoloration of honeycomb structure in the catalyst component carrying process or in the baking process. Therefore, when the ink jet method is used, it is desirable to use thermally resistant ink.

[0054] In general, the catalyst component is not carried on the external surface of honeycomb structure by masking. Therefore, the marked bar code etc. are not buried by the catalyst component. However, since slight discoloration is inevitable, the marking conditions of the bar code etc. must be set so that the bar code etc. are legible. In the case of laser marking, since the surface of member is decomposed and removed in a very shallow region, the honeycomb structure which has passed through the catalyst component carrying process and on which the catalyst component has been carried is conveyed to the canning process.

[0055] In the canning process, the bar code which car-

ries the information about the outside-diameter dimension of honeycomb structure is read by a bar-code reader. The read dimensional information is sent momentarily to the metal vessel manufacturing line. The metal vessel is formed by rounding a thin metal sheet to a predetermined dimension by using a press jig and by joining the joint portions by welding to form a can shape. The aforementioned information is sent to the can manufacturing device, and the dimension of can is determined based on this information. Thus, the clearance between the honeycomb structure and the metal vessel (can) is controlled, and the optimum combination is realized.

[0056] The specific pressure also varies depending on the bulk density of compressible material interposed between the honeycomb structure and the metal vessel. Therefore, in order to obtain the optimum combination of the clearance between the honeycomb structure and the metal vessel and the bulk density of compressible material, the metal vessel and the compressible material can be selected based on the bar-code information on the honeycomb structure. There is generally known a method in which characters are used as information transmitting means in place of bar code.

[0057] The character information as well can be printed by the ink jet method or the laser marking method. In this case, the printed character information is photographed by a CCD camera, and is recognized by the pattern matching method. This method is to register characters in advance and to select a pattern closest to the registered characters from the shading information of photographed characters. The inventors read the outside-diameter dimension marked by the aforementioned laser marking method and the numerical information about mass by using an F350 image recognizer manufactured by Omron Corp., and verified that the information could be transmitted correctly.

[0058] The reading principle of bar-code reader is as described below. A laser beam is irradiated on a bar-code label, and the irregularly reflected light is received by the light-intercepting portion of bar-code reader. The irregularly reflected light produces a difference in intensity due to a difference in reflectance between space and bar. By changing this difference to an ON/OFF digital signal, the space and bar are discriminated, whereby the bar code is read. Therefore, even in the case of bar code, when the difference in intensity of irregularly reflected light (PCS) is small, it is difficult to read the bar code using the bar-code reader, so that the aforementioned image recognizing method is effective.

[0059] As a general canning method, any method of the clamshell method shown in Figure 3, the stuffing method shown in Figure 4, or the tourniquet method shown in Figure 5 is used. Besides, the shrinking method using the technology for plastic working of metal is carried out. Specifically, as shown in Figure 6, the outside-diameter dimension of the metal vessel 5 is decreased by applying a compressive pressure from the outside via a tap (pressurizing type) 11, or as shown in

Figure 7, the outside-diameter dimension of the metal vessel 5 is decreased by pressing the metal vessel 5 into a jig 12 having a taper in the inner peripheral portion near one opening end.

[0060] Further, as shown in Figure 8, by using a method in which the outer peripheral surface of the metal vessel 5 is pressed by plastic working using a working jig 13 while the metal vessel 5 is rotated (what is called a rotary forging method), the outside diameter of the metal vessel 5 can be decreased, and thus a specific pressure can be applied. By the use of this method, in combination with the working in which both ends of can are drawn into a cone shape by spinning, which has been done recently, working ranging from canning to cone forming can be performed on an integrated working line.

[0061] In the above-described clamshell method, stuffing method, and tourniquet method, as shown in Figures 3 to 5, respectively, a compressive elasticity holding material (compressible material) 7 is wound around the honeycomb structure 1 in advance. In the clamshell method, as shown in Figure 3, the honeycomb structure 1 with the compressible material 7 being wound is held by a two-piece metal vessel 5a, 5b while a load is applied, and the joint face (collar) portions are welded to form an integrated vessel. In the stuffing method, as shown in Figure 4, the honeycomb structure 1 with the compressible material 7 being wound is pressed into an integrated metal vessel 5 by using a guide 9. In the tourniquet method, as shown in Figure 5, a metal plate 5' serving as the metal vessel is wound around the honeycomb structure 1 with the compressible material 7 being wound and is pulled to provide a specific pressure, and the joint portions of the metal plate 5' are welded and fixed.

[0062] According to the clamshell method, when the honeycomb structure is pressed from the upside and downside, a shift of mat (compressive material) occurs. In the stuffing method, when the honeycomb structure is inserted into the metal vessel, a shift of mat occurs on the insertion side. Therefore, if the shifted portion spreads to a wide range, the specific pressure increases as a whole as well.

[0063] A method suitable for applying a specific pressure is to hold the honeycomb structure in the metal vessel while a specific pressure is applied with a shift of relative position of the mat and the metal vessel being made as small as possible. From this point of view, the tourniquet method, shrinking method, and rotary forging method are desirable because the can surrounds the cell structure wound with the compressible material prior to the application of a specific pressure so that the shift of relative position between the can and the compressible material is small. A procedure can also be carried out in which the stuffing method is used only to arrange the honeycomb structure in the can and the shrinking method or the rotary forging method is used to apply a specific pressure.

[0064] A method can also be used in which after the

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honeycomb structure is held in the metal vessel before the catalyst component is carried, the catalyst component is carried on the honeycomb structure in the metal vessel. According to this method, the honeycomb structure can be prevented from chipping or fracturing during the catalyst component carrying process.

Industrial Applicability

[0065] As described above, according to the present invention, when an assembly in which a cell structure is housed and held in a metal vessel via a compressible material, even if the external-shape dimension of the cell structure etc. constituting the assembly varies, the influence of variation can be made little, and a proper holding state without a fracture etc. of cell structure can be obtained easily.

Claims

An assembling method for an assembly wherein a
cell structure is housed and held in a metal vessel
via a compressible material having a cushioning
property by holding said cell structure with said
compressible material, with placing said compressible material between the outer periphery of said cell
structure and said tubular metal vessel in a compressed state so as to apply a mounting pressure
to said cell structure via said compressible material,
characterized by

marking information regarding an outside dimension of said cell structure and/or an inside dimension of said metal vessel on surface of a member of the assembly prior to the start of an assembling process,

reading said information, and

selecting a cell structure and a metal vessel so as to achieve a proper holding condition therebetween based on the read information in the assembling process.

2. An assembling method for an assembly wherein a cell structure is housed and held in a metal vessel via a compressible material having a cushioning property by holding said cell structure with said compressible material, with placing said compressible material between the outer periphery of said cell structure and said tubular metal vessel in a compressed state so as to apply a mounting pressure to said cell structure via said compressible material, characterized by

marking information regarding an outside dimension of said cell structure on surface of a member of assembly prior to the start of an assembling process,

> reading said information, manufacturing a metal vessel so as to achieve

a proper holding condition between said cell structure based on the read information, and

combining thus formed metal vessel with said cell structure.

- The assembling method according to claim 1 or 2, wherein a marking format of said information is characters.
- 10 4. The assembling method according to claim 1 or 2, wherein a marking format of said information is a bar code.
 - The assembling method according to claim 1 or 2, wherein said information is marked with two kinds of marking formats.
 - The assembling method according to claim 1 or 2, wherein said information is marked with both of marking formats of characters and a bar code.
 - The assembling method according to any one of claims 3 to 6, wherein said information is marked by ink.
 - The assembling method according to any one of claims 3 to 6, wherein said information is marked by thermally resistant ink.
- 30 9. The assembling method according to any one of claims 3 to 6, wherein said information is marked by two kinds of inks.
- 10. The assembling method according to any one of claims 3 to 6, wherein said information is marked by both thermally resistant ink and non-thermally resistant ink.
 - 11. The assembling method according to any one of claims <u>7</u> to 10, wherein the method for marking said information by ink is an ink jet method or a thermal transfer method.
- 12. The assembling method according to any one of claims 3 to 6, wherein said information is marked by a laser.
 - 13. The assembling method according to any one of claims 3 to 6, wherein said information is marked by sandblasting.
 - 14. The assembling method according to any one of claims 3 to 6, wherein said information is marked by chemical corroding action.
 - **15.** The assembling method according to any one of claims 3 to 6, wherein said information is marked by stamping using a stamp.

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- 16. The assembling method according to any one of claims 3 to 6, wherein said information is marked by a method in which said information is printed on a label, and said label is affixed onto said member surface.
- 17. The assembling method according to any one of claims 3 to 6, wherein said information is marked with two kinds of marking methods.
- 18. The assembling method according to any one of claims 3 to 6, wherein said information is marked with both marking methods of an ink jet method or a thermal transfer method and a stamping method using a stamp.
- 19. The assembling method according to any one of claims 7 to 11, wherein a transparent water-repellent liquid is applied onto a marked information after marking of said information.
- The assembling method according to claim 19, wherein said water-repellent liquid is a resin or silica sol.
- 21. The assembling method according to any one of claims 1 to 20, wherein said compressible material having a cushioning property is one kind of material or a composite material consisting of two or more kinds of materials selected from a group consisting of a metallic wire mesh, an intumescent mat formed by ceramic fiber and vermiculite. and non-intumescent mat containing ceramic fibers as a major component, but being free from vermiculite.
- 22. The assembling method according to any one of claims 1 to 21, wherein a method for housing said cell structure in said metal vessel so as to apply a mounting pressure to said cell structure via said compressible material is any of the methods consisting of the group of a clamshell method, a stuffing method, a tourniquet method, a shrinking method, and a rotary forging method.
- 23. The assembling method according to any one of claims 1 to 22, wherein, said cell structure is housed and held in said metal vessel after loading a catalyst component on said cell structure.
- 24. The assembling method according to any one of claims 1 to 22, wherein a catalyst component is loaded on said cell structure after housing said cell structure to hold it in said metal vessel.
- An assembly which is assembled by the assembling method as described in any one of claims 1 to 24.
- 26. The assembly according to claim 25, wherein said

- assembly is used as a catalytic converter for purifying automobile exhaust gas.
- 27. The assembly according to claim 25 or 26, wherein said cell structure is a honeycomb structure having a plurality of cell passages formed by a plurality of walls and an outer peripheral wall surrounding said cell passages.
- 10 28. The assembly according to claim 25 or 26, wherein said cell structure is a foamed structure.
 - 29. The assembly according to any one of claims 25 to 28, wherein said cell structure is formed of a material selected from the ceramic materials consisting of cordierite, alumina, mullite, lithium aluminum silicate, aluminum titanate, titania, zirconia, silicon nitride, aluminum nitride, silicon carbide, and or a composite containing two or more kinds of said ceramic materials.
 - 30. The assembly according to any one of claims 25 to 28, wherein said cell structure is formed of one kind of adsorbing material selected from a group consisting of activated carbon, silica gel, and zeolite.
 - 31. The assembly according to any one of claims 25 to 30, wherein a plurality of cell structures are arranged in series along a cell passage direction in one metal vessel via the compressible material having a cushioning property.
 - 32. The assembly according to any one of claims 25 to 30, wherein a plurality of assemblies each of which houses and holds one cell structure in one metal vessel via the compressible material having a cushioning property are arranged in series along the cell passage direction of said cell structure in one metallic outer casing.
 - 33. A cell structure on which said information is marked, which is used in the assembling method as described in any one of claims 1 to 24.
- 45 34. The cell structure according to claim 33, wherein said cell structure is used for a catalytic converter for purifying automobile exhaust gas.
 - 35. The cell structure according to claim 33 or 34, wherein said cell structure is a honeycomb structure having a plurality of cell passages formed by a plurality of walls and an outer peripheral wall surrounding said cell passages.
- 55 36. The cell structure according to claim 33 or 34, wherein said cell structure is a foamed structure.
 - 37. The cell structure according to any one of claims 33

to 36, wherein said cell structure is formed of one kind of ceramic material or a composite consisting of two or more kinds of ceramic materials selected from a group consisting of cordierite, alumina, mullite, lithium aluminum silicate, aluminum titanate, titania, zirconia, silicon nitride, aluminum nitride, and silicon carbide.

38. The cell structure according to any one of claims 33 to 36, wherein said cell structure is formed of one kind of adsorbing material selected from a group consisting of activated carbon, silica gel, and zeo-lite.

FIG. 1 (a)

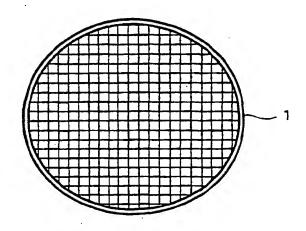
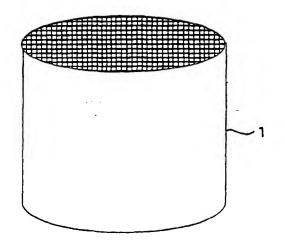


FIG. 1 (b)



F I G. 2

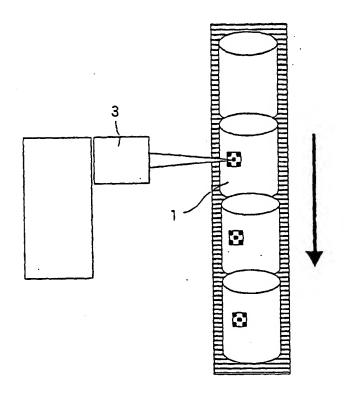


FIG. 3

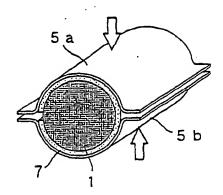


FIG. 4

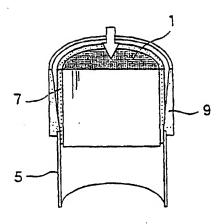


FIG. 5

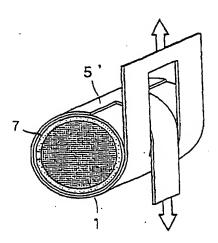


FIG. 6

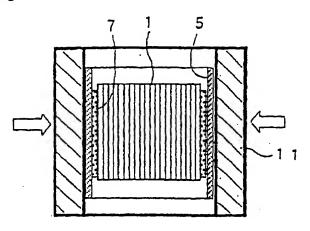


FIG. 7

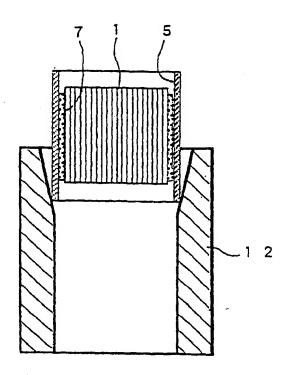
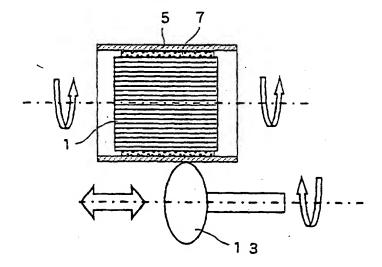


FIG. 8



INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

International application No.

PCT/JP01/10004

Int.Cl ⁷ B23P 21/00, F01N 3/28				
According to International Patent Classification (IPC) or to both national classification and IPC				
B. FIELDS SEARCHED				
Minimum documentation searched (classification system followed by classification symbols) Int.Cl ⁷ B23P 21/00, F01N 3/28				
Documentation searched other than minimum documentation to the extent that such documents are included in the fields searched Jitsuyo Shinan Koho 1926-1996 Jitsuyo Shinan Toroku Koho 1996-2002 Kokai Jitsuyo Shinan Koho 1971-2002 Toroku Jitsuyo Shinan Koho 1994-2002				
Electronic data base consulted during the international search (name of data base and, where practicable, search terms used)				
C. DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT				
Category* Citation of document, with indication, where appropriate, of the relevant passages	Relevant to claim No.			
<pre>Y</pre>	1-38			
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Y JP 11-258013 A (Gastar Corporation), 24 September, 1999 (24.09.1999), abstract; Par. Nos. [0037], [0038] (Family: none)	1-38			
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y JP 7-47285 A (Toyota Motor Corporation), 21 February, 1995 (21.02.1395), Par. No. [0005] (Family: none)	24			
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Date of the actual completion of the international search Date of mailing of the international search	Date of mailing of the international search report 19 February, 2002 (19.02.02)			
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Facsimile No. Telephone No. Form PCT/ISA/210 (second sheet) (July 1992)				

EP 1 334 795 A1

INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

International application No.

PCT/JP01/10004

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	17 June, 1997 (17.06.1997), abstract (Family: none)		28,36
Y	EP 918145 A2 (Níssan Motor Co., Ltd.), 26 May, 1999 (26.05.1999), column 6, lines 45 to 52; Fig. 4 & JP 11-210451 A Par. No. [0036]		30,38
Y	JP 2000-291424 A (Honda Motor Co., Ltd.), 17 October, 2000 (17.10.2000), Par. Nos. [0007] to [0009]; Fig. 1 (Family: no	one)	31
Y	JP 2000-204931 A (Yamaha Motor Co., Ltd.), 25 July, 2000 (25.07.2000), Par. Nos. [0029] to [0030]; Fig. 2		32
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